

Homeless Shelter Workers in Midwestern Urban Centers

Archie Green Fellows Project AFC2016034

Oral History of Lorraine Davis, Executive Director of the Native American Development Center

Bismarck, North Dakota on April 3, 2017

Summary of Interview

Lorraine Davis founded and is the Executive Director of the Native American Development Center, located at 205 North 24th Street, Bismarck, North Dakota, 58501. She assists Native American members of the Bismarck community with social services based on improving their personal development and their economic development.

This interview took place in Lorraine's office at the Native American Development Center, address above.

Interview Log

- 00:00:01 Introduction
- 00:00:12 Lorraine is a tribal member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota Sioux tribe in South Dakota. Lorraine created and is the Executive Director of Native American Development Center (NADC), incorporated in 2012; programming began in 2014 and still evolving; building the board and community awareness: currently conducts home buyer workshops, credit score repair workshops, economic education, and one-on-one counseling; may become a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), lending to the Native American community through consumer loans and micro enterprise loans;
- 00:03:10 Issues that prevent people from being able to work are:
- Mental health
 - Physical disability
 - Criminal history
 - Poor credit (for some jobs)
 - Reliable transportation
 - Homelessness
- 00:04:27 Lorraine started her nonprofit because she was once in the situation many clients are; understands how employers and landlords have the economic upper hand; system doesn't allow people to tell the story behind a criminal charge or low credit score;
- 00:05:46 NADC has a Memo of Understanding (MOU) with the North Dakota Department of Corrections to provide mentoring services to Native Americans; discussion of need for change so that people exiting corrections aren't homeless and unemployed due to ex-offender status; NADC consumer loans will be available to people with these issues;

- 00:08:22 NADC goal to create a Native American community within Bismarck/Mandan area; Lorraine's personal story; she offers peer support; serves as the chair of the Governor's Behavioral Health Planning Council to bring cultural competency to the area; getting her PhD; discussion of historical trauma;
- 00:12:16 Lorraine's experience with prison; hoping for treatment; Jamestown Correctional Center; in prison she had a spiritual revelation; discussion of lack of infrastructure to support people's social, emotional and mental health; discussion of people in survival mode; housing is the first thing people need to begin sobriety; story of running on the prison track and remembering who she was before her addiction; committed herself to returning to prison to help people after her release; discussion of spirituality and the Bible;
- 00:34:19 Discussion of whether 51% of NADC will be as a lending organization or just offer life skills and education; she is only staff person, but is mentoring others to assist;
- 00:36:50 Discussion of lack of support services or shelters for Native Americans when she was in need;
- 00:38:19 Question about over-representation of Native Americans in at-risk populations; discussion about the lack of consumer education; Native Americans have had their own economic system, rather than engaging in the Euro-American economic system; alcoholism; discussion of a system that puts economics first before people;
- 00:43:34 Coaching people on importance of college, a good job; Maslow's hierarchy; homelessness makes it hard to think beyond survival; without considering the economic, Native American people will continue to be left behind; Bismarck State College has a Humanities Scholar in Native American policy; Lorraine's husband is the North Dakota Native American Affairs Commissioner; North Dakota Medora Foundation; Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) and protest against it; her husband is from the Standing Rock tribe; her sense that Native American issues have become more visible; Bismarck-Mandan has the largest Native American urban population in the state, and the most tribal diversity because of the United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck;
- 00:51:05 For Native American families who become homeless NADC has computers, phones, connection to resources; discussion of nomadism and Great Plains Indians; discussion of tribal employment opportunities:
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
 - Bureau of Indian Education
 - tribal government jobs
 - casinos
- 00:53:43 Intersection with other social services; North Dakota Coalition for Homeless People; working on community relationships; no formal referral structure; Native American children and the foster system; most of her time has been spent building relationships with providers and local government;
- 00:56:46 Christianity and importance of bringing people to find God; how spirituality factors into social issues; Lorraine's "Stories of Resiliency" project; Native Americans and Christianity and Native American spirituality;
- 01:01:36 NADC has a Statewide Culture Committee for tribal representation; North Dakota has five tribes:

- Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota
- Three Affiliated Tribes (Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara)
- Spirit Lake
- Standing Rock
- Turtle Mountain

Lorraine's youth; born in L.A. and then moved to a rural South Dakota town; experiences that have given her balance; difficult conversations with local service providers about what she has witnessed and heard about the treatment of local Native American people; historical trauma and oppression; her service on many boards to bring a Native American perspective;

01:16:10 Advice to someone entering this work; people should discern if they are called to this work through their faith or for other reasons;

01:19:12 NADC isn't a treatment center; cultural component of making drums and beading regalia for powwow as restoring the circle; people she works with are:

- in halfway houses
- have just gotten out of prison or jail
- in treatment
- in a shelter;

01:21:35 End